

DOCUMENT RESUME

01986 - [A1112099]

[Travel Expenses Incurred Due to Illness in Employee's Family].
B-187198. April 18, 1977. 2 pp.

Decision re: Gary B. Churchill; by Robert F. Keller, Deputy
Comptroller General.

Issue Area: Personnel Management and Compensation: Compensation
(305).

Contact: Office of the General Counsel: Civilian Personnel.
Budget Function: General Government: Central Personnel
Management (805).

Organization Concerned: National Aeronautics and Space
Administration.

Authority: 5 U.S.C. 4702(b). F.T.R. (FPMR 101-7), para. 1-2.4.
47 Comp. Gen. 59.

Ralph P. Shawlee, Authorized Certifying Officer, NASA, requested a decision as to whether an employee who abandoned his official travel to a temporary assignment due to illness in his family can be reimbursed for travel costs back to his headquarters. As he was not instructed to abandon his temporary assignment, employee was not entitled to reimbursement. (DJH)

Herbert Dunn
Civ. Pers.

DECISION



**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES**
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548

FILE: B-187198

DATE: April 18, 1977

MATTER OF: Gary B. Churchill - Travel Expenses Incurred
Due to Illness in Employee's Family

DIGEST: An employee who upon arrival at his temporary duty station abandons his official travel due to illness in his family is not entitled to the travel and transportation expenses incurred in returning to headquarters, notwithstanding the employee was directed by his superior to return, or that he experienced severe trauma upon learning of his wife's illness and was granted 4 hours of sick leave for the remainder of the day.

Mr. Ralph F. Shawlee, a certifying officer of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), by letter dated August 9, 1976, requested an advance decision as to whether NASA may properly pay the cost of return travel from Dallas, Texas, to Moffett Field, California, of Mr. Gary B. Churchill, an employee of NASA.

The pertinent facts as presented by the certifying officer show that Mr. Churchill left his permanent duty station at Moffett Field, California, the morning of May 4, 1976, and traveled by air to Dallas/Ft. Worth Airport to coordinate various tests at Bell Helicopter Textron, Dallas, Texas. Upon Mr. Churchill's arrival at the Dallas/Ft. Worth Airport, he was advised that his supervisor had telephoned with the information that Mr. Churchill's wife had been stricken with a respiratory arrest and was in the intensive care unit of a hospital at Mr. Churchill's permanent duty station. Further, Mr. Churchill's supervisor instructed him to return to California. Mr. Churchill, acting upon this information, abandoned his temporary duty station and returned to San Jose, California, at 3:20 p.m. on May 4, 1976. In a memorandum dated July 14, 1976, and forwarded to us by the certifying officer, Mr. Churchill states that his return trip should be at Government expense because he had experienced a severe trauma and was in fact placed on sick leave for 4 hours after receiving the information concerning

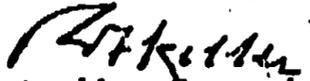
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his wife's illness. Further, 5 U.S.C. § 5702(b) and Federal Travel Regulations, paragraph 1-2.4 provide that when an employee, who while traveling away from his official station on official business becomes incapacitated through illness, transportation expenses may be authorized.

As the certifying officer points out in his submission, we have held that an employee who upon arrival at his temporary duty station abandons his official travel due to an illness in his family is not entitled to the travel and transportation expenses in returning to his headquarters but may be reimbursed only the cost of official travel to the point of abandonment. 47 Comp. Gen. 59 (1967). That rule is applicable here. Accordingly, Mr. Churchill is not entitled to reimbursement of the cost of travel for his return trip from Dallas to San Jose, California.

If Mr. Churchill had abandoned his temporary assignment primarily because of his illness or if he had been directed to return for official purposes, there is no doubt that he properly could have been reimbursed for the return trip from Dallas/Ft. Worth to San Jose despite the fact that he had not completed the contemplated assignment in Dallas. However, he was not instructed to abandon his assignment in Dallas for official reasons. The sole basis for terminating his assignment was personal. Further, Mr. Churchill's illness occurred after he was instructed to return to San Jose, and it appears that the circumstances which precipitated Mr. Churchill's return would still have resulted in his abandonment even if Mr. Churchill had not suffered trauma. Therefore, we are unable to conclude that Mr. Churchill's return trip was the direct result of his illness.

The travel voucher of Mr. Churchill may not be certified for payment.


Deputy Comptroller General
of the United States